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Arts-Based Research in the Social and Health Sciences: Pushing for Change with an Interdisciplinary Global Arts-Based Research Initiative

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Key words: arts-based research; arts-informed research; radical imagination; social activism

Abstract: The impact of current trends in technology, digitalization and mass media on our global culture raises questions regarding the responsibility and ethics of research decisions in contemporary social and health sciences. Embedded in the dominant paradigms, these trends subtly affect our worldviews, our valuation of the human condition, and the nature of socio-political discourse. In such critical post normal times (SARDAR, 2009) radical imagination (HAIVEN & KHASNABISH, 2014) and epistemic activism, embracing non-dominant modes of knowledge production in the social and health sciences, becomes a necessity. Arts-based research (ABR) is resonant with the onto-epistemological perspectives and methodologies necessary to challenge and disrupt current unilateral and hegemonic paradigms underlying decaying societal and geo-political constructs. In this article, we advocate for the development of a global network of ABR scholars and stakeholders invoking a radical imaginative philosophy and arts-based research methodologies as an approach to social activism and epistemological change.

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1. Introduction and Arts-Based Research Perspectives

The impact of current trends in technology, reductionism, and mass media on our global culture raises questions regarding the philosophy, role, responsibility, and ethics of research decisions in contemporary social and health sciences. Within our current socio-political climate, the values of empathy, introspection, meaningful intersubjective social discourse, and truth, relative to the human condition is at a critical point. The primacy and sustenance of these human values and discourse depends upon our perception of agency in re-constructing our relationally and socially engaged global community, generating, advancing and disseminating knowledge, and evaluating the impact on our social systems and intersubjective evolution. [1]

The current status of our global condition invites a form of epistemic activism that embraces non-dominant modes of knowledge production and counters totalizing discourses which tend to reproduce the *status quo* in the social and health sciences. Arts-based research (ABR) is emerging as a socially engaged philosophical and methodological approach to research that addresses these challenges. The inherent pluralistic and eclectic onto-epistemic of ABR has the potential to reveal and capture the dynamic, sensory-embodied unconscious, or tacit dimensions of the collective human condition. Although intangible and usually overlooked in more traditional paradigms, these dimensions are influential motivators and explicators of human behavior. Arts-based research prioritizes the study of human multi- dimensionality while simultaneously raising critical consciousness, increasing public accessibility, and evoking embodied transformation. [2]

The philosophical principles of ABR simultaneously represent a relatively new postmodern development and an ancient philosophical conversation on the relation of shared and individual sensory embodied *tacit knowledge* (POLANYI, 1967 [1966]). For example, sensory binding is central to HEIDEGGER's reflection on the etymological origin of the ancient Greek concept of *logos* as *legein* or "gathering" (1975 [1951], p.61). Consequently, language, whether word, image or sensory-embodied, is not only symbolic but also builds a culture that brings interpretations and communications together to construct relational realities and implicit knowledges. [3]

An essential element of ABR holds that direct experiential knowledge of the world is fundamentally aesthetic and pragmatic. In turn, heightened awareness of how we exist in relationship to the world is critical to forming a more equitable public sphere. Following this framework, activist ABR scholars employ aesthetics to generate new civic possibilities by engaging with social issues, transcending dominant discourse, and creating dialogic communities (CAHNMANN-TAYLOR & SIEGESMUND, 2018). [4]

Applying these considerations to qualitative and arts-based inquiry suggests that knowledge is not antiseptically found in data. Construction of interpretations is a messy process that engages relational contexts and social interactions (GERGEN, 2009). Similarly, artistic productions do not have meanings in or by themselves. Following HEIDEGGER's interpretations on *logos*, artistic works open a space where gatherings occur. A gathering can be a live contemporary audience followed by discussion. A gathering could be a solitary individual reconnecting with inscribed works of past human endeavor to envision future human potentialities. Gatherings lie before us to open possibilities to interpretations and meanings. For instance, while it is true that "non-linguistic forms generate and communicate meanings that may otherwise remain dormant" (EISNER, personal communication, 2011), these communications are not independent from the listener's readiness and ability to hear them and from the journal editor's or curator's willingness to make them available to the public as a local context of interpreters. [5]

These collective and relational features of arts-based research are at the basis for its activist dynamic, as "art has the ability to change our minds—inspiring us to take on different perspectives and to reimagine our worlds" (NOSSEL, 2016, p.103). Thus, ABR influences or challenges the socio-political landscape. ABR scholars can share grounds with social activists, while also engaging in rigorous evaluations of the impact and efficacy of activism—evaluations that bring together and embrace affect and effect (FAIREY, 2008). [6]

Summarily, arts-based and arts-related research have emerged as philosophical and methodological approaches that are aligned with social activist views positing values of aesthetic power, emotional illumination, social accessibility, and radical discourse (BARONE & EISNER, 2012). Furthermore, through a post-qualitative reinvigoration of aesthetics, ABR is positioned as an innovative approach to research, transcending embedded socio-cultural divisions and epistemological hierarchies, promoting new insights about the human psyche, advocating for the power of intersubjective discourse, and enabling social reconstruction and transformation. [7]

Despite the historical precedents and current relevance of socially engaged ABR philosophy and practice, it faces implicit transdisciplinary biases, paradigmatic dominance, and methodological obstacles that impede its global valuation and advancement (HAIVEN & KHASNABISH, 2014; KLOOGER, 2009; LEAVY, 2015). These challenges require re-imagining discourses and rewriting narratives employing pluralist ontologies and research methodologies, epistemic eclecticism, and axiological primacy of the arts within a post-positivist, neoliberal culture. Furthermore, maximizing the contributions of ABR to advance social justice requires collaborative transparent dialogues about alignment, divergence, and complementarity with other research traditions while initiating paradigmatic shifts toward ABR's re-positioning and global inclusion. [8]

In this article, we introduce our efforts in tackling the challenge of increasing the visibility, accessibility, and acceptability of ABR on a global level for purposes of epistemological activism, revitalizing human compassion, countering reductionism, and engaging in social change. The first phase towards accomplishing these ambitious objectives was to convene a thinktank or "gamechanger" at a recent meeting of the [European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry](#) (ECQI). At this meeting we invited and engaged with international scholars who are experienced and/or interested in ABR to explore philosophical assumptions, definitions and practices, and evaluation in ABR as part of an evolving ABR Global Consortium. This article represents a report and preliminary findings of phase one of our gamechanger project presented within the context of current and evolving thinking on ABR and social activism. In our report, we first present an overview of the gamechanger project (Section 2). In Section 3, we describe the agenda and participants accompanied by a review of literature relevant to our exploration and results. The categories for our gamechanger and related literature include philosophical perspectives on ABR (Section 3.1), defining ABR characteristics, methods, and practices (Section 3.2), and current issues and challenges in ABR evaluation (Section 3.3). Finally, in Section 4 we

conclude with a summary and pose critical questions for our work moving forward. [9]

2. Our Gamechanger Project

Our gamechanger project began with the formation of a core group of multi-disciplinary ABR scholars who developed a multi-phase plan aiming to promote visibility, credibility, accessibility, and fundability of socially engaged arts-based research in the social and health sciences. Collaboratively, our group created a gamechanger or thinktank on the future of arts-based research in the social and health sciences. We invited scholars from multiple disciplines, cultures, and countries to join us in this initiative at the third annual ECQI conference to conduct discussions, generate data, and formulate strategies for advancing our ABR agenda. [10]

The gamechanger itself is an innovative socially constructed venue designed for its inclusive, participatory action-orientation, transformative, and reformative potential. Over the course of three days, we convened three groups to address three primary topics relative to our ABR agenda: philosophical and historical issues, definitions and practices, and evaluation. The participants included individuals from multiple countries, disciplines, and research backgrounds. Due to the appeal of co-occurring presentations at conferences, our gamechanger was designed to be a fluid, accommodating constant change with the exit and entrance of people, emergent ideas, and a shifting group composition mirroring typical social dynamics. Although participation was fluid, a solid subgroup formed of those who returned daily committing to the project during the conference and beyond. The methods used during our explorations included visualization, concept mapping, visual arts, dance/movement, and small and large group discussion embodying a microcosmic ABR socially engaged process with artistic, research, and performative components. [11]

Our results, as outlined in this article, illustrate the status of our current initiative advocating for the use and valuation of ABR to address critical geo-political and social issues. Thus far, we have developed a 31+ member ABR global scholar network and created a global map reflecting its geographical distribution. We are developing a document compiling the collective wisdom on good ABR philosophy and practices, and we are constructing a database of global topics that may benefit from arts-based research practice and disseminative accessibility. Finally, we are reconvening follow-up meetings of our global network at upcoming events to re-evaluate our current status and identify goals for the future. [12]

3. Our Gamechanger Results

3.1 Radical philosophical perspectives

Paradigmatically, ABR embraces the pluralistic social focus of constructivism, the linguistic deconstruction of post-structuralism, the emergent nature of post-qualitative inquiry, the axiological primacy of power and oppression in the transformative paradigm, and the knowledge generating tension of difference from the dialectical stance (CRESWELL & PLANO CLARK, 2011; GREENE, 2007; JOHNSON, 2015; MERTENS, BLEDSOE, SULLIVAN & WILSON 2010; ST. PIERRE, 2019). However, ABR, while embodying pluralistic ontologies and eclectic epistemologies, simultaneously resists rigid classifications and methodologies. ABR exists on a dynamic "dialectical edge" (ISRAELSTAM, 2007, p.591) juxtaposing creativity and destruction, reason and imagination, conscious and unconscious, known and unknown (CHILTON, GERBER & SCOTTI, 2015; GADAMER, 2007 [1992]). The dialectical tensions of difference create the liminal or in-between spaces from which imagination, creativity, and the novelty of new ideas necessary for both individual and social change emerge (GREENE, 2007; ISRAELSTAM, 2007; JOHNSON, 2015; KLOOGER, 2009; SARDAR, 2009). Therefore, ABR's contribution to social activism and change stems from its intrinsic resistance to recalcitrance and tensions with the *status quo* (HAIVEN & KHASNABISH, 2014; SARDAR, 2009; SULLIVAN, 2010). [13]

ABR's inherent dialectical aesthetic epistemology and pluralistic intersubjective ontology relies upon experiential individual and collective unconscious pre-verbal, sensory, embodied, emotional, and imaginal ways of knowing (CHILTON et al., 2015; HARRIS-WILLIAMS, 2010). Within this perspective the aesthetic epistemic prioritizes retrieval of unconscious artifactual data such as memories, personal/collective histories, and relational narratives essential to understanding current perceptions, socially constructed discourses, motivations, and behaviors (BROWN, 2011; CHILTON et al., 2015; HARRIS-WILLIAMS, 2010). Intersubjectivity in this context is defined as a collective unconscious dialogue or a "jointly constructed narrative ... [that] ascribes meaning to experience for which no language previously existed" (BROWN, 2011, p.1), evoking different kinds of knowing, insight and change in the "intra psychic worlds" (p.109) of the social actors or agents (NGUYEN, 2018). [14]

CASTORIADIS (1998 [1975]) emphasized this perspective within the cultural intersubjective context of the social unconscious. He coined the term *radical imagination* to describe the untapped potential of the collective unconscious to re-imagine and reconstruct our society. According to HAIVEN and KHASNABISH (2014),

"... radical imagination is that tectonic, protean substance out of which all social institutions and identities are made, and which, likewise, is constantly in motion under the surface of society, undermining and challenging all that we take to be real, hard, fast and eternal" (p.6). [15]

Considered a form of social activism, radical imagination "... is the ability to imagine the world, life and social institutions not as they are but as they might otherwise be. It is the courage and the intelligence to recognize that the world can and should be changed" (p.3). Within the current social and geo-political context, "where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense" (SARDAR, 2009, p.435), traditional paradigms cannot accommodate the "complexity, chaos, and contradiction" (p.436) of what SARDAR called postnormal times. [16]

Radical imagination aligns with ABR philosophy and practice which embraces the "complexity, chaos and contradiction" of the dialectical inquiry necessary to disrupt the usual (HAIVEN & KHASNABISH, 2014; SARDAR, 2009; URRIBARRI, 2002), and to destabilize the *status quo* while promising novelty, new knowledge, and transformation (DELEUZE & GUATTARI, 1987 [1980]; EDWARDS, ARFAOUI, McLAREN & McKEEVER, 2017). Imaginative mental processes and arts-based practices re-imagine and represent uncomfortably shifting realities and knowledge by simultaneously being evocative, emotionally communicative, and palatable. These aspects of evocativeness and accessibility are essential to re-imagine new social constructs and re-create social discourses for change (HAIVEN & KHASNABISH, 2014; KLOOGER, 2009). [17]

Finally, the aesthetic intersubjective perspective is inherently relational evoking intimate human emotional communication, relationality, and understanding often lacking in other research approaches (CHILTON et al., 2015; EISNER, 2008; KAPITAN, 2010; LEAVY, 2015). The embodied, emotional, and evocative impact of imaginative mental processes and arts-based practices transcend the limitations of intellect and boundaries of physicality creating conditions for empathic human connection and transformation. [18]

3.2 Arts-based research definitions and practices

Defining characteristics of ABR represent interactive philosophies and practices that exist on a continuum including: the centrality of the arts epistemic in the research; the degree of engagement with multiple or singular arts genres; the role and competency of the researcher in generation, assemblage, analysis, and representation of the arts-based data; the method and degree of inclusion of the audience or co-researchers; the form, positioning, and status of the art included, in some or all phases of the research; and the interpretation and representation of the result. [19]

Although there have been multiple attempts at classifying the continuum of the arts in research (ARCHIBALD & GERBER, 2018; COLE & KNOWLES, 2008; WANG, COEMANS, SIEGESMUND & HANNES, 2017), for the purpose of this article they might be characterized as arts-related research, arts-informed research, and arts-based research (see Table 1). Arts-related research includes research in which the arts are used peripherally to emphasize or exemplify certain aspects of participant data and/or results. Arts-informed research centralizes the arts within a qualitative research tradition. Arts-informed research, therefore is "a

mode and form of qualitative research that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts" (COLE & KNOWLES, 2008, p.59). In arts-informed research arts-based data is generated from participants or co-researchers to illuminate existing qualitative data. In contrast, ABR prioritizes the epistemology and methodology of the arts in a "systematic use of the artistic process ... as a primary way of understanding and examining experience" (McNIFF, 2008, p.29) in which the researcher actively utilizes the artistic practice to investigate most or all phases of the research from data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation (ARCHIBALD & GERBER, 2018; BARONE & EISNER, 2012; COLE & KNOWLES, 2008; GERBER & MYERS-COFFMAN, 2018; LEAVY, 2015; McNIFF, 2008). [20]

Central to the arts in research along the continuum is the aesthetic epistemic representing the sensorial, embodied, and emotional ways of knowing which, when used to varying degrees, gives form and meaning to the invisible aspects of the human experience (LANGER as cited in EISNER 2008, p.7) not expressible in other forms of communication (BARONE & EISNER, 2012; CHILTON et al., 2015; EISNER, 2008; KAPITAN, 2010; LEAVY, 2015). Furthermore, critical to the socially engaged and transformative function of ABR, these variables are inherently collaborative and accessible by including the participants and audience to varying degrees in the generation of data, interpretation and representation of results, and dissemination of the findings. [21]

Of critical importance along the ABR continuum is the degree of engagement in the investigative arts process. Art as research practice is the intentional use of imaginative mental and creative arts processes as the primary means of conceptualization, investigation, and illumination essential to the transformative power of arts-based research in social inquiry. The capacity to be truly imaginative and creative in arts-based research practice often is reliant upon sophisticated cognitive processes, artistic competence, and emotional strength of the researcher—the ability to engage with ambiguity, dissonance, and discomfort, beyond the certain, familiar, and the usual (GERBER & MYERS-COFFMAN, 2018; LEAVY, 2015). Entering this realm of imaginative, creative, arts-based thinking and researching allows for the generation of new perceptions through a dialectical process that disrupts the usual.

Table 1: Defining features of arts in research. Click [here](#) to download the PDF file. [22]

SAJNANI (2012) notes that this practice requires an opening to uncertainty, attunement to difference, and an aesthetic intelligence. These dialectical aptitudes and navigational skills are necessary for the emergence of new knowledge and are illustrated in the ABR methodology of *a/r/tography*. In *a/r/tography*, like other ABR practices, knowledge is found in liminal spaces of encounter and distancing that are inevitably part of the inquiry process: between the researcher's and the participant's subjectivities (GEMIGNANI, 2011); the center and the margin of a social group (FINE, WEIS, WESEEN & WONG, 2003); the insiders and outsiders of a community; the translated and the original text (SPIVAK, 1974); or in the impossibility of interpretations (PARKER, 2005). These

interpretations are becomings, not clear transmissions scrubbed free of error, but messy unfoldings in which both creator and recipient struggle to produce a new resonance that neither fully anticipated at the outset. Summarily, in considering the maximum socially transformative impact of ABR, it is essential to assess degrees of engagement with both participants/audiences and in the imaginative arts-based research practices by the researcher as compared to the arts as exemplars of data or illustrative representations of the results. Engagement (Table 1) includes the strategic selection of artistic genres including literary, dramatic and performative arts, two- and three-dimensional visual arts, poetry, music and sound art, dance, digital and virtual media, and multi-media (LEAVY, 2015; WANG et al., 2017). The selection of arts-based genre relates to several factors, two of which are the researcher's level of competence in the genre; and the compatibility to the indigenous knowledge of the participants and/or phenomena under investigation. [23]

These rich descriptions from the literature served as a context for discussion and arts-based reflections initiated in our gamechanger on the defining characteristics, practices, and evaluative criteria in ABR during which participants shared their thoughts, images, reflections, insights, and research experiences reported in the next two sections. [24]

Our exploration into defining ABR and its methods reflected the basic epistemic and practices of ABR during which the process of iterative, intersubjective, and imaginative methods of collaborative investigation yielded surprising results and multiple insights amplifying the actual voices of the participants.

I think with my hands
I think with my ears
I think with my pen
I think with my body
I think in pictures [25]

Mirroring and embodying the ABR process, this poem was an arts-based result of a discussion about the qualities of ABR during which the group proffered spontaneous associations, visual reflections, words phrases and images that contributed to the construction of defining characteristics of ABR. Furthermore, in spontaneous interactive discussions, our group defined ABR as a collaborative and creative process guided by a specific purpose. Essential to this process is beginning with not knowing and engaging the dialectic process of emergent dialogues from which new knowledge and insights are born. Embracing the dialectic aesthetic epistemic, this imaginative arts-based process includes intentional engagement with multi-dimensionality and simultaneity in which the micro and macro, one and many moments, sensory and embodied knowledge, and one and many voices engage making invisible phenomena and people visible. Arts-based practices adopt accessible approaches to presenting and disseminating results that engage the public in an aesthetically evocative and

poetically embodied experience creating empathy, amplifying the unheard, and cultivating intersubjective discourse for social change. [26]

ABR methods or practices, as approached in the literature, are intentionally ambiguous based upon the onto-epistemology and the dynamic emergent nature of the artistic inquiry process. However, there is generally agreement that ABR begins with a question followed by selection of an arts-based genre and strategy to initiate the inquiry. Imaginative and arts-based processes such as free association, improvisation, reverie, reflection, collaboration, assemblage, and synthesis occur dynamically and iteratively throughout the arts-based research inquiry (GERBER & MYERS-COFFMAN, 2018; KAPITAN, 2010; LEAVY, 2015; SAJNANI, 2012). Our gamechanger group amplified practices that facilitate the progression from ideas and conversations to the creation of images, sounds, poems, and/or movement as art processes which produce preliminary results. This echoed the important aspect of beginning with free associative and improvisational approaches in order to tap into the unconscious sensory, embodied, and visceral aspects of the phenomenon followed by iterative intrinsic arts and intersubjective dialogues. Emergent from these processes is the formation, assemblage and construction of data aligned with dialogic evaluation of the process and product at critical points in the inquiry engaging participants and audiences. The dialogic evaluative processes focus on the relationship of the depth and rigor of the arts-based methods to the initial phenomena, evolving questions, and the aesthetic power of the results. The outcome of these dynamic and iterative arts-based investigative processes are forms of installations, performances, exhibits, and other art genres that aim at resonating with the audience, amplifying marginalized voices, and promoting empathic emotional transformations at personal and social levels. It is in these processes and results that ABR aspires to move beyond dominant paradigmatic constructs, concepts, and language in order to engage in evocative, meaningful, and socially transformative dialogues. [27]

Arts-based research transcends disciplinary silos, cultural divisions, and other man-made societal constructions, and therefore is particularly impactful in crossing social and geo-political boundaries engaging multiple audiences in meaningful, transformative social discourse. Embracing the mental and collaborative processes of radical imagination ABR similarly represents "... our capacity to imagine and make common cause with the experiences of other people; it undergirds our capacity to build solidarity across boundaries and borders, real or imagined" (HAIVEN & KHASNABISH, 2014, p.3). [28]

3.3 Evaluation of arts-based research

The ABR community presents itself as a transdisciplinary, multi-focused mix of researchers from variant backgrounds, modalities, and specializations including those trained in the arts and design sector, social-behavioral science, public health, STEM, education, and humanities to name a few (COEMANS & HANNES, 2017). In order to support the understanding, development, administration, and acceptance of ABR as rigorous research, there is a need for evaluative parameters around the processes of ABR and the impact it might have on an individual, group, or societal level. Limited knowledge and structure around such parameters can lead grant providers, particularly larger funders such as NIH, to compare ABR to post-positivist research, using quality measures such as validity, reliability and generalizability to judge the quality of research. They might also be judged by criteria proposed for assessing the quality of conventional qualitative research; the extent to which the findings are credible, dependable, confirmable, or transferable to other settings (LINCOLN & GUBA, 2010). For ABR, it is more important to emphasize how the method relates to broader pedagogical, societal, or philosophical objectives (WANG et al., 2017). The heart of the evaluation of ABR is inclusive of the significance of addressing social issues through the artistic integration in order to activate knowledge around the necessity to address social constructs, activism, and advocacy (BARONE & EISNER, 1997, 2012; LAFRENIÈRE & COX, 2012; VIEGA, 2016). [29]

Several parameters for assessing the quality of ABR have been identified to guide the game changer part on evaluation. LAFRENIÈRE and COX (2012) identified the difficulty with ABR lacking not only a means of overall evaluation, but also the concern over the need to evaluate different art forms through different lenses. They offered criteria with which to begin the conversation around evaluation including: 1. Normative criteria incorporating methodological and ethical criteria; 2. substantive criteria incorporating technical and artistic criteria; and 3. performative criteria. BARONE and EISNER (2012) proposed six criteria: incisiveness, concision, coherence, generativity, social significance, and evocation and illumination. NORRIS (2011) offered four sections of evaluation including pedagogy, poesis, politics, and public positioning. VIEGA (2016) added that ABR should neither compromise scientific nor artistic rigor placing great value on not only the methodology and design of the research, but also the creative process, which plays a significant role in exploration. He also noted that the nature of art and performance is fluid and dynamic, which could result in the evaluation of the artwork shifting with its varying iterations and presentations. [30]

As we proceeded with our initial discussion and development of an evaluation framework for ABR, we became aware of and considered some of the tensions inherent to a process of guideline development or moving towards consensus. Is the focus of the ABR on the value of the end-product, the process itself or what is eventually achieved with it? Should the evaluation criteria be comprehensive across different art modalities or specific to each discipline and does the modality matter in the context of trying to evoke change? Should the art, itself, be evaluated for rigor and expertise, particularly if the goal is related to an activism

agenda? Should the person(s) engaging in the art process be professionally trained artists, or can lay-people use art as a form of investigation or research? If we succeed in answering these questions in upcoming events, the remaining one would be: What is the specific identity of activism-research and what place does it take in an academic context? What happens when it falls under the responsibility of ethical boards and grant committees, as this might require signing up to the accountability logic currently steering the landscape of academic research? [31]

Thinking from within the ABR context of activism for change, the very act of creatively disseminating research data to a wider public might be considered an accountability practice in itself while simultaneously disrupting frames of reference to generate new illuminations. When the performing data resonate with societal actors' lived experience it might even replace more traditional notions of accountability and credibility such as member checking and the use of "citations" to support lines of argument (NAIDU & PROSE, 2018). [32]

The discussion illustrates that ABR driven work in a scholarly context is full of paradoxes. However, questions that remain unanswered also invite us into thinking paradoxically ourselves, to reject fixed principles of truth, causality and discursive normation. They force us to act and take a stance (KORO-LJUNGBERG, 2015). It is the assumed impossibility of combining research with an advocacy agenda that makes us wonder when and under which conditions ABR becomes research activism and flies under yet a different set of quality criteria that values the idea of creating dissonance and difference. The gamechanger venue and the resulting reflections and synthesis of that experience allow us to situate ABR in the broader spectrum of available research approaches and call for a reform or extension of the type of evaluation criteria currently used. [33]

4. Conclusion

The survey of the literature, collaborative exchanges, and gamechanger explorations of this project have yielded continued interest in studying the nature and implementation of radical imaginative philosophies and ABR practices relative to social reformation and transformation. Continued engagement with a diverse group of global scholars, artists, and researchers to explore, illuminate, and re-construct our human social narrative seems warranted. Moving forward, however, it has become clear to us that in order for ABR to live up to its activist expectations, other questions have emerged: 1. How does ABR engage in change through the use of unconventional methods, practices, or claims?; 2. How can methods, practices, and changes be documented, disseminated, and verified beyond dominant paradigmatic parameters?; 3. Does it succeed in disrupting regularly produced practices, systems, and structures, particularly when they are oppressive or exclusive in nature?; 4. Does it result in desirable and sustainable changes?; 5. Does it inspire trust in its value for particular target groups or general society?; and, most importantly 6. Did it propose a better alternative? [34]

Answering these questions would speak towards the transformative agenda of ABR practices to challenge established static ideologies and research endeavors. Starting from an inclusive perspective, embracing ABR means to acknowledge the onto-epistemic, the broad variety of artistically inspired studies within our ABR community, and a trans-disciplinary orientation of its researchers. Simultaneously, we must align these modes of inquiry and their social outcomes with criteria for credible and rigorous ABR and the critical activist agenda of our global ABR collective. Summarily, at the very least, we aim to facilitate the act of speaking and asserting embodied presence in the public sphere for those whose voices are often neglected. As much as we use public conferences and creative dissemination formats to make others acknowledge injustice, academic activism for change might also mean that we have to literally walk, embody, and join these voices on the path against injustice through arts-based research, evocations, performances and actions to intensify understanding, communicate their position, and advocate for change (RACINE, TRUCHON & HAGE, 2008). [35]

Acknowledgments

As we move forward with our ABR Global Consortium we would like to extend our gratitude to all of those who joined us during our first gamechanger. We hope they and others will join us as we continue to form an agenda and strategy for activism in ABR to impact individual and collective transformation and social reformation.

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